Miao AES

continued slow infiltration since that time. The second migration occurred in the form of a /130/ violent invasion whose floods descended as far as Phuyenbinh on the borders of the delta. The Meo, pushed back by the Annamese mandarins and also by the heaviness of the climate of the valleys, which they were unable to bear, withdrew towards the upper Claire River and settled upon the plateau of Quanba and of Dongquan. Here they made the peaceable inhabitants tremble under a yoke of domination which was as brutal as it was ephemeral. An enlightened individual named Sioung made himself noticed among the Meo because of his prodigious agility. He struck the imagination of his kinsmen by jumping in a single leap to the top of a mass of furniture that he had piled up several meters high, and proclaimed his own royalty from the top of this improvised tower supported by spirits' protection. From all of the areas roundabout they came to the mountain of Tang Chang (between Yenminh and Quanba) bringing him presents. Sioung became recognized as king under the title of Choen Tien, and had a palace built for himself surmounted by a tower called Long Vei (the dragon's throne). The Man and Nung joined with the Meo in accepting his rule, but the Tho, persisted in not recognizing him. The "King of the Meo" followed them with his hatred for twelve years. His father-in-law, whose daughter he had killed, resolved to avenge himself by killing this bloody tyrant. He sent ten Chinese friends of his to work as artists in the Palace of Sioung and the man was massacred by them a short time later.

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The Chinese provinces inhabited at the present time by the Miao Tse are Szechwan, Yunnan, Kweichow. Therefore, without fear of error, we may consider these the countries of origin of the Tonkinese Meo and the reservoir from which their infiltrations will continue to flow.

131

The Meo ethnic group apparently is subdivided in China into seventy varieties, but the only ones found in Tonkin in groups of any considerable size are the White Meo, Red Meo, and Black Meo. As a matter of fact, this division into varieties is much less important here then among the Yao, where certain features of their customs, certain details in their religious rites, certain words of their language vary from one tribe to another. Among the Meo on the contrary, the differences are reduced to variations in details or in the colors of women's clothing.

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/131/ As we have seen, the characteristic of the Meo is their

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M /39 cont./
631 retained a certain moral influence upon the neighboring
[648] Tonkinese regions, but, of course, exercises no executive authority at all over these peoples."

The situation is different in Thailand where the Meau immigrated in small groups and were often able to remain completely independent, like most of the other mountain tribes. Seidenfaden (4) also mentions this more or less in-

4. II, p. 102.

dependent community of such peoples. Under these circumstances in Thailand today there are no political units larger
M than the village, over which there is the village chief. In
[648] the administered parts of the country, he has to be approved by the district officer. Moreover, the villages of the Meau consist of only a few houses, whereas in former times their village unit, too, was powerful.

A Among the Akha in Thailand the custom of having
621 great village settlements with one hundred to two hundred houses has been maintained (cf. the chapter, "Statistical and Demographic Data and Differences between the Various
A Meau and Akha Tribes"). A larger political unit does not
[631] exist.

/40/ b) Kingship and Chieftainship

M The memory of times when there was a much larger
643 political unit has been kept alive to this day among the Meau.
[631] Thus, tradition tells of a powerful kingdom of the Meau, an hereditary kingship, in which the king was at the same time the supreme war-lord.

After the death of a king, the entire people, that is, all the mature men able to bear arms, selected the successor from among the sons of the deceased. It did not make any difference to which of the generally numerous wives of the king this son was born.

/40 cont./

173 According to the tradition of the Thailand Meau, as my informants told me, their last king waged war against the
● 643 Chinese because the latter menaced the Meau settlements.
648 After the initial successes of the royal commander-in-chief, tă lĕn tĕŭ, the Meau were nevertheless beaten. The king and his military leaders died in the bloody battle. Then the younger brother of the slain king assumed leadership. He led all the people southward on the flight before the pursuing enemy. -- The present-day Meau in Thailand no longer re-
643 member the kingship in detail. It could not be learned, for instance, whether the crown was customarily passed on to the son or to the brother of the deceased. Only the designation
668 for king - văn tsŏ has survived. Even today they believe that
643 sometime and somewhere a Meau king will rise again, who will unite his people, gather them together, and lead them victoriously against the hated oppressors. Savina (1) describes

1. II, p. 258.

similar ideas from among the Meau in Indochina: "The Meau are waiting for a liberator, a king, a phoa thay. As soon as the report of a phoa thay comes from somewhere, they immediately take up their weapons and set out to put themselves at his disposal. What we call a 'rebellion' they call oa phoa thay, 'to make a king.'"

173 Far more vivid, however, is the memory of the Meau
634 concerning the power and activity of the great chiefs (tsŭń kŏăń). One of my informants in particular knew all kinds of details; he was a direct descendant of the last great chief. The memory of the great chief, however, /41/ was also alive among the other Meau and in any case was more vivid than that of the king, since the common man probably scarcely had an opportunity to know the king himself except by hearsay.

39: Bernatzik--321 E-5 (1936-1937) 1947 AO1 Thailand
Miao AE5

Chapter 12

Law and the Administration of Justice

a) Property Law

423 [643] [634] [622] [596] [184] Among the Meau uncultivated land formerly belonged to the king, later to the great chief, and today to the village chiefs. Cultivated land belongs to the person who has planted or inherited it, that is to say, to the head of the large /extended/ family in question. Conditions seem to be the same in Tonkin, since both Lajonquière (1) and Abadie (2) confirm my observations.

1. II, pp. 319 and 320.

2. Page 164.

The latter points out that among the Meau who live near irrigated rice fields or especially fertile soil the property rights over landed property are precisely established. The land belongs to the person [428] who cultivates and manages it, and it is transferred by hereditary transmission.

423 622 628 The situation regarding landed property among the Meau in Thailand is regulated in a very practical way. Every village chief is free to take possession of uninhabited land, into which he moves. If another village is already present in the territory concerned, permission must be obtained from the village chief there, who, by his mere presence, originally took possession of the land. If there is enough cultivable land for all the parties, this permission is always granted in practice. No special fee or rent has to be paid.

423 596 622 Accordingly, the head of every large /extended/ family is free to cultivate the untilled land lying in the vicinity of the village, which, as such, belongs to the village chief, without the special permission of the latter.

/395 cont./

726 most suitable in the difficult forested mountainous terrain inhabited by the Meau. In addition, an attempt is made to reach and occupy all the passes ahead of the opponent.

The war tactics of the Meau consist of surprise attacks from ambush, preferably during the night. At first only small sections of troops are sent out, while the numerically stronger reserves are held back. Single combats are unknown. If the
727 Meau are victorious, they chop off the head of every slain or captured opponent and send these trophies to their tsŭn kŏăn,
[634] the great chief, who pays money for them. Thus, there are no war trophies in the true sense. No harm is done to the women and children of the enemies; they are respectively married or adopted by the warriors. Enemy property, too, is not
[643] destroyed as a rule. The war booty is brought to the king, or
[634] lacking such a one, to the great chief for distribution among the warriors of his district.

726 Usually the battles are not as bloody as one might assume from the description. The fleeing enemy can soon escape his pursuers in the primeval forest, and the women and children immediately left their villages with /396/ all their movable property as soon as the spies reported the approach of enemy troops.

721 The purpose of war today among the Meau is exclusively to protect their own living space. Since as far back as the memory of man they have been in a defensive position in relation to their
[166] powerful neighbors, and since their constant migration southward is closely related to their search for such a safe living space, it is no longer possible to ascertain whether before that time other grounds for war were decisive. In any case the principle of only fighting tribal enemies prevails, whereas nothing is reported about wars between Meau tribes.

728 In the same way that an official declaration of war precedes the battles, war is also ended only by an appropriate ceremony. The opponents meet without weapons, eat a meal together, and declare that they want to be friends from now on. The Meau are also familiar with the truce, however, which